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AUTHOR Bulach, Clete R.
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ABSTRACT

This article describes three interacting phases of the New Lexington City Schools' staff development program, which began in 1979. The first phase, overcoming psychological resistance to the program, had three components: convincing staff, designing a plan ensuring staff control of events, and developing a climate to foster openness, trust, and risk-taking. To lessen teachers' fears, the district's five-year goal was announced as "instructional improvement," not staff development. The second component involved creating groups to work on curriculum issues and send representatives to meet with the superintendent. As part of the climate-setting component, teacher and student forums were established, and administrators became responsible for modeling appropriate leadership qualities. The second staff development phase used a product approach; teacher groups worked to develop a 5-year timeline for text selection and preparation of curriculum guides, lesson plans, and other materials. The school benefited from increased staff interaction, improved textbook evaluation, and enhanced subject area expertise. The third phase, a process approach, concerned improving teachers' instructional abilities and interpersonal skills. An inservice program involving negotiated personal growth contracts, released time, and tuition reimbursement was developed. The result has been improved student achievement and higher teacher morale. Appendices include a teacher questionnaire and statements on professional growth, curriculum development, and teacher tuition payment. (MLH)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Clete R. Bulach
Superintendent
New Lexington City Schools
New Lexington, Ohio

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of States on Inservice Education (Denver, CO, November 22-26, 1985).

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

The New lexington City Schools staff development program began in earnest at the beginning of the 1979-80 school year. There were three distinct phases to our program. During the first phase, plans were made to overcome psychological reactance to staff development. The second phase focused on the product approach to staff development while the third phase focused on the process approach to staff development. This article will be an attempt to describe each of those 3 phases and how they relate to each other.

Staff development efforts frequently generate psychological reactance on the part of staff. Psychological reactance[1] is defined as a negative influence which results from a threat to independence or freedom. Staff development in this case is the threat because the mention of the word itself implies that the staff needs to be developed. Therefore it follows that they are not what they ought to be and change needs to occur. The end result is psychological reactance on the part of staff which is manifested in a resistance to staff development efforts. Therefore, a plan to overcome psychological reactance is necessary if staff development efforts are to be successful.

The plan to overcome psychological reactance has 3 components, i.e., getting staff to accept staff development as a goal, an organizational plan designed to give staff control of events, and the development of a climate to foster openness, trust, and risk-taking. Getting staff to accept staff development as a goal was accomplished at a district-wide meeting where the superintendent announced that the goal for the school year and for the next 5 years was instructional improvement. Any mention of staff development was avoided. The rationale for substituting instructional improvement

[1]Brehm 1966, A Theory of Psychological Reactance, New York: Academic Press

for staff development is as follows: the word staff development is internalized and taken personally, and as previously stated, staff feel threatened at the prospect of having to change. Instructional improvement on the other hand is an impersonal word and is often interpreted as new textbooks, curriculum lesson plans, tests, instructional techniques, etc., i.e., products. Making changes in these areas are more readily accepted and not as threatening to the teacher. Although in fact, instructional improvement could also result from a workshop on problem solving, team building, motivation, interpersonal communications, etc., i.e., processes. The point being made is that the goal of staff development and instructional improvement is the same, i.e., to improve the quality of instruction for students. This point will be developed more fully as the product and the process approach to staff development are developed later in this paper. Instructional improvement, however, is more readily accepted as a goal than staff development and diminishes the likelihood of psychological reactance.

The second component in overcoming psychological reactance is to develop an organizational plan which puts staff in charge of the instructional improvement effort. Key ingredients of the plan[2] are: all staff must meet a minimum of one hour a month in small groups of 6-12 people; each group makes recommendations to the administration on who will chair their group; each group has been assigned an administrator as a resource person and facilitator; and each group develops short range and long range goals which state how they are going to improve instruction. The chairperson of each group meets with the superintendent 2-3 times a year or more often

[2]Bulach, "An Organizational Plan for Curriculum Development" Educational Leadership, January, 1978

on an as needed basis. This group is referred to as the "instructional team". A key ingredient of this plan is that teachers are given control of the instructional improvement or staff development effort. This removes any threat to their independence and by definition reduces psychological reactance.

The third component is establishing a climate of openness, trust, and risk-taking. This climate is described in detail by Gibb, 1967[3]. He writes:

> "This process of allowing people to be responsible for their own destinies, for setting their own targets, assessing their own development needs, searching out resources to aid in job accomplishment, and participating in setting organizational objectives is basic to high-trust leadership. Instead of using conventional defensive-leadership techniques of skilled persuasion to induce acceptance of leadership goals, the high-trust administration participates in cooperative determination of goals and in cooperative definition of production and staff problems.....
>
> .....The effects of participative leading are diametrically contrary to those of defensive leading. Love begets love. Respect begets respect. Trust produces trust. People who are trusted tend to trust themselves and to trust those in positions of responsibility. Moreover, the feeling that one is trusted encourages exploration, diversity, and innovation, for the person spends little time and energy trying to prove himself. His time and energy are freed to define and solve problems, accomplish work, and create new dimensions of his job. A fearful person uses a great deal of energy in defending himself against present or anticipated threat or attack; a confident and self-assured person can direct his energy towards goals that are significant to him as a person."

The establishment of the groups mentioned in component #2 was part of the climate setting process. It was one way of putting Gibb's theory into practice. Additionally, a Teacher Forum was established.

[3]Gibb, Jack R., "Dynamics of Leadership", Current Issues in High Education, National Education Association, 1967.

This group met with the superintendent once a month. Membership on the group was limited to one representative per building and all representatives were elected. The monthly meetings were supposed to be rap sessions designed to open up communications and develop trust. They were successful in doing this, but after the first year or two they became gripe sessions and as a result were disbanded. It was the belief of the building principals that their authority was being undermined, that formal communication channels were being bypassed and that distrust was developing. In retrospect, it is my opinion that this type of activity is productive until such time as it becomes a "gripe" or "bitch" session. However, I found it to be very effective initially, as a way of helping to establish a climate of openness, and trust.

Another group established as part of the climate setting process was the "Student Forum". It consisted of elected representatives of each grade and building in grades 7-12. It's purpose was the same as for the Teacher Forum. It too, eventually, became a gripe session and was disbanded. However, it was a very effective tool in the beginning of our staff development plan for opening up the system.

A key part of the climate setting process was a 30 hour "interpersonal communications" workshop.[4] The focus of the workshop was on the 5 basic interpersonal communication skills, i.e., paraphrasing, non-verbal behavior, description of feelings, perception checking, and feedback. All administrators took part in the workshop. It was repeated twice for interested teachers and some citizens from the community.

[4]Jung, Charles, et al., Interpersonal Communications, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories, XICOM Inc., Tuxedo, New York, 1977

Another key part of the climate setting process is "modeling." The superintendent, and as many administrators and board members as possible must model the leadership style they are trying to develop in the district. Basically, the qualities of the leadership style to be modeled are: openness, trust, confidence in others, self acceptance, and personal assurance. It is highly likely that all members of the management team will be unable to model these qualities, and while this will hurt the effort it will not defeat it. I have found that eating lunch with the teachers in the teacher's lounge is an excellent opportunity to model the qualities you are trying to promote. Of course, it must be remembered, that every interpersonal communication is an opportunity to establish the climate you are trying to set.

If the above prescription or some variation thereof is followed, psychological reactance to staff development will be reduced. In review, the organizational plan which involves all staff and gives them some control over events to follow, is the key. Some human relations workshops which provide people with interpersonal skills so they can function better in their groups is extremely helpful but not absolutely necessary. The informal communications created by the teacher and student forums are also helpful, but not necessary. The modeling of the leadership qualities that are being fostered is absolutely essential for the superintendent and to some degree for the other administrators and board members. All of these factors should produce a school district where staff are consciously and subconsciously involved in staff development.

The second phase of our staff development effort is called the product approach to staff development. This phase is started within

1-4 months of the start of phase one. Essentially the phase starts when the groups established in phase one begin working on job targets which they selected or which were suggested by the administrator assigned to the group. Each group involved in curriculum work was asked to develop a 5-year timeline for text selection, writing courses of study, curriculum guides, performance objectives, tests, unit plans, lesson plans, etc.. These are called products of staff development. Other products could be a grading plan, a system of teacher evaluation, a policy for distributing medication, a system for identifying talented and gifted students or any other product or plan the system needs developed.

While the product being developed is very helpful to the school system, the real benefits are in other areas. The major benefit is derived from the monthly interaction of staff as they work on their products. Staff is engaged in a "safe" activity, e.g., writing a course of study, and they are receptive to new ideas. Consequently, they relate to each other about what they are doing in the classroom, what they learned at a workshop or class, their successes, failures, etc.. Granted the same activity can occur in a teacher's lounge, but all to often the activity in a teacher's lounge is more social than about how to improve instruction. The staff in New Lexington City Schools has been involved in this type of activity one hour a month for the last 6 years and a lot of good staff development has just kind of happened.

A second benefit of the product approach is the abilities the staff has developed in textbook evaluation and selection and in writing curriculum related materials. When the State Department of Education

instituted their competency based education plan and timeline for accomplishing it, we found we were 2 years ahead of schedule. In short our staff has developed some excellent abilities in writing curriculum and instructional materials.

A third benefit has been the subject area expertise a number of our committees have developed. For example, we have our own elementary science, math, social studies, reading, and language arts experts. They have been working on their own for 6 years and they consider themselves very good in their subject area. The products they produce are excellent and when they need to select a new text, they know which they want.

A fourth benefit to be derived from the groups that have been established is the understanding that develops for what is going on in the school system outside of a teacher's classroom and school building. A first grade teacher learns what is happening at the 6th grade level, the American history teacher learns what the World history teacher is doing, the teacher at one building learns what is going on in another building in the district, etc.. This knowledge is of great benefit in developing K-12 scope and sequence in curriculum areas. It has also given them a much broader perspective and understanding for what is happening in the school district which makes them more receptive to change.

In conclusion, the product approach to staff development has been very well received at New Lexington City Schools. We have rewritten our curriculum K-12 and produced a number of other curriculum materials. Teachers have acquired a lot of expertise in curriculum development and they have learned and continue to learn from each other.

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The process approach to staff development is defined as any activity which is designed to improve a teacher's instructional abililties and/or interpersonal skills, e.g., questioning strategies, discipline techniques, human relations, teaching techniques, etc.. School districts, typically set aside 1 or 2 days a year for this type of staff development. An in-service or staff development committee conducts a needs assessment* and develops an agenda for the in-service days based on the agenda. We have followed that same pattern in New Lexington City Schools and it has been productive.

The New Lexington City Schools has found the negotiated contract to be a very effective staff development tool in the process area. Our present contract contains an article on professional growth (Appendix B) which requires all teachers to file a professional growth plan with their principals by November 1 of each year. The contract also spells out how many days are devoted to district-wide inservice. I would suggest that boards try to get 5 days in the school calendar set aside for staff development.

Another article in the contract requires all school buildings to have professional libraries. The article requires teachers to serve on committees which select materials and books.

A major article (Appendix C) in the contract concerns itself with the work of the groups mentioned in phase one. The amount of time to be devoted to group work is spelled out, i.e., the teachers give 4 hours of their time and the school gives 4 hours of released time each year. While 8 hours is required by the contract, in actual practice, some committees voluntarily spend in excess of 20 hours a year working in their groups. Additionally, a number of our teachers spend 2-4 hours a month getting ready for their monthly meeting.

* See Appendix A for a sample needs assessment instrument. The instrument was developed by Sue Tobin, one of our teachers, as part of a graduate course requirement.

The article also spells out the reimbursement of chairpeople and the members of the committee for the work they do. Three factors figure into the amount of reimbursement: the number of people on the committee; the amount of equipment and inventory they are responsible for; and the amount of curriculum materials to be maintained or developed.

Additional incentives for staff development are provided by articles dealing with teacher tuition reimbursement and additional lanes on the salary schedule. The board will pay the full cost of tuition up to $400 per year for coursework in education, administration, guidance, or areas related to the teaching field. (See Appendix D for further information) Regarding the salary schedule we have a Bachelor's degree + 30 semester hours lane, a Masters lane, and a Masters + 30 semester hours lane as incentive for teachers to get additional training.

In summary, the heart of phase III activities is the negotiated contract. It covers the number of days set aside for in-service, the work of the groups, individual professional growth, reimbursement for professional leave, and additional coursework at the universities. It is the most effective staff development tool we have.

There is evidence that our staff development efforts are paying off. Student test scores have been increasing every year, e.g., 8th Language Arts scores have risen from 8.2 to 9.0. Our students regularly score above the national average despite the fact that students entering kindergarten are 1-2 years below the national average due to cultural deprivation. High school students in the past 3 years have scored 21.5, 21.05, and 19.23 on the ACT compared to a national average of 18.0.

Our students enter competition in all areas, e.g., art, math, science, media, etc., and regularly place, with frequent 1st place finishes. Our FFA group recently won 17 out of 25 1st place awards at the district level. Last year they were the number one chapter in the State of Ohio. The FFA Alumni group has been chosen as the #1 Chapter in the United States, 3 out of the last 5 years. We have had a lot of successes and more are sure to come.

At the present time phase I, II, and III staff development activities are occurring simultaneously. Our latest staff development activity is a goal setting activity whereby the instructional team decided to make our district-wide goal for the 1985-86 school year "the improvement of morale." Morale as it was used referred to student, staff, and community morale. Sub goals selected in descending order were:

- the utilization of staff skills and resources through increased staff interaction;
- increased skill and knowledge about motivational techniques which can be utilized to motivate the self and others;
- improved school-community relationships; and,
- raise the level of trust between teachers and administrators.

The process used for arriving at this decision was the rating of all items generated in a brainstorming session on a scale of 1-10, with 1 meaning not of much importance and 10 being of great importance. A list of thirteen items was generated by the brainstorming session.

The top four items in the rating exercise were then ranked from 1 to 4 with the item ranked 4 as the most important and 1 as the least important. As a result of this process, we have obtained our goal for the 1985-86 school year and the sub goals that relate to the main goal.

The next step is the establishment of a committee which will meet to develop a plan of action which will result in an improvement of morale. The administrators will meet to discuss the makeup of the committee. The board of education will also discuss the topic at their next board meeting.

In conclusion the staff of New Lexington City Schools has moved from a point 6 years ago where very little was happening in the area of staff development to a point where they are actively pursuing the improvement of morale, greater staff interaction, motivational skills, raising trust levels, and improved school-community relations. You might say that we've had a lot of staff development going on in New Lexington City Schools and there is a lot more being planned, but we never call it staff development. It just kind of happens. I have no doubt that we will make a lot of progress on our goals. It is going to be a very exciting year!

WHAT EVERY TEACHER HAS A RIGHT TO ASK FOR
IN THEIR NEXT IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

1. When you think about teaching your class tomorrow, what is the one most pressing concern or anxiety YOU have about doing the very best job you can do?_____

_____

_____

2. What areas of instruction or teaching techniques would you like to become more familiar with? Rate these according to your own interest, from 1 to 5, with 1 being your first choice.

_____ A. Questioning Techniques
_____ B. Individualization
_____ C. Problem Solving
_____ D. Bloom's Taxonomy
_____ E. Evaluation Procedures
_____ F. Workshop-way Techniques
_____ G. Discipline Procedures
_____ H. Simulations
_____ I. What you can do for gifted students
_____ J. Motivation
_____ K. Contracting with students
_____ L. _____

3. What other major needs or areas of concern would you like your school district to give special attention to through In-Service Programs? Check as many as you need.

_____ A. Developing human relations skills.
_____ B. Working with the special needs of students.
_____ C. Improving reading skills.
_____ D. Improving math skills.
_____ E. Communications
_____ F. Assessing styles of learning
_____ G. Stress Management
_____ H. Development of Computer Literacy

Other _____

4. How would YOU prefer to learn new skills, or improve rusty ones?

_____ A. Seminars or Workshops, large groups
_____ B. Seminars or Workshops, small groups
_____ C. Independent Studies
_____ D. Film Viewing
_____ E. Group Lectures
_____ F. Visits to other schools
_____ G. Working with or observing of teachers in your own district
_____ H. Other _____

5. Do you believe that personal-motivation speakers are an important part of in-service education? Please explain why or why not.

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. If there is an in-service activity, or an area of particular interest to you, that has not been mentioned in this questionnaire, please tell us about it.

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. What is your personal opinion about in-service education?

_____
_____
_____

8. In which school building do you work?

_____

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Both the Board and the N.L.E.A. recognize the need for certificated staff to develop and/or maintain a program of professional growth. Teachers shall file, in writing, with the principal, not later than November 1st of each year, a plan for professional growth. This plan may be changed at any time. Examples of activities in which teachers may engage are: professional readings, workshops, seminars, book exhibits, and observing another teacher at work (approval must be obtained from the teacher who is to be observed and no report shall be made). A written or verbal report is to be made to the principal before the end of the school year about accomplishments. First year teachers, teachers who have returned from a sabbatical leave, and teachers who have earned a masters degree during the previous school year are not required to comply with this Article.

The Board shall reimburse the employees for expenses incurred for approved professional growth experiences such as attendance at workshops, conferences, seminars, competitions, etc., but not for readings, library work, personal studies not connected with course work at an institution of learning, etc.. The maximum reimbursement allowed shall be $350.00.

Teachers shall receive reimbursement for at least one (1) overnight workshop, conference, etc., per year. Reimbursements for meals on one day trips are upon approval of the Superintendent only.

APPENDIX "C"

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The N.L.E.A. and all members agree that organized effort in the area of curriculum and instruction is necessary and therefore agree to devote a minimum of eight hours a year consisting of one hour a month of organized activity on district curriculum committees. The district will allow four (4) hours of released time for this purpose; the other four (4) hours will be in addition to the employee's regular work day.

Department chairpeople shall be required to coordinate curriculum work. Other assignments shall be determined cooperatively by the administration, department chairperson, and the individual to be assigned.

Failure to attend curriculum meetings shall result in:

1. Notification to the employees and a copy to the N.L.E.A. that he/she is in violation of the Curriculum Development Article of the Agreement, and
2. A written reprimand, a copy of which will be placed in the employee's personnel file, except when such failure to attend is due to a leave of absence.

Compensation:

Department chairpeople shall be compensated for coordinating curriculum work which shall be according to the following factors:

Factor #1 -- Coordinating the Maintenance of Equipment and Inventories
- a) For small responsibilities such as K-6 Social Studies--$60.00
- b) For medium responsibilities such as 7-12 Science--$120.00
- c) For large responsibilities such as Business Education--$180.00

Factor #2 -- Coordinating Course of Study/Tests
- a) For small responsibilities 1-6 courses and/or tests -- $100.00
- b) For medium responsibilities 7-11 courses and/or tests--$150.00
- c) For large responsibilities 12-up courses and/or tests--$200.00

Factor #3 -- Coordinating the work of Committee Members

Department chairpeople shall coordinate curriculum development and shall be compensated at the rate of $30.00 for each person serving on their committee or in their department.

Calculating Compensation

Example: English Dept. 7-12

Factor #1		$60.00
Factor #2	(6 courses of study)	$100.00
Factor #3	(6 in department x $30)	$180.00
		$340.00

(OVER)

TEACHER TUITION PAYMENT

The Board will pay the full cost up to $400.00 for the first year of the contract and $500.00 for each year thereafter for courses in the field of education, administration, guidance, in the bargaining unit members area of certification and related areas, and other pursued areas of certification.

1. The teacher must file a written application with course number and description of course listed on the application to the Superintendent of Schools for written approval prior to beginning the course.

2. The teacher must submit an official transcript of completed courses and a tuition voucher to the Superintendent's office before payment will be made.

3. The teacher shall be paid upon evidence of completing the course. Teachers agree to teach in New Lexington for one school year after receiving reimbursement or shall pay back such to the Board.

4. All teachers employed in the New Lexington City Schools who have valid teaching certificates are eligible to participate in this program.

5. The Board will not pay for grades of "D" or "F".